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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/18): NO MILITARY SOLUTION TO
GAZA ROCKET ATTACKS

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Main Stories:

The front pages of the dailies report existence of an "Israeli plan to invade Gaza." Al-Ayyam reports that, "Israel plans to hand over the Gaza Strip to Egypt or a third party." Dailies also note that, "Tel Aviv threatened that Hamas will pay a high price," especially in response to recent killings of Israeli soldiers near Gaza. Al Quds' front page attributes the threat to a statement by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. Meanwhile, all papers report that Hamas called upon its members, "to target and hit the enemy everywhere. Al-Ayyam adds that Hamas announced that, "the zero hour for [Gaza] exploding is coming soon". Reports also continue to highlight the effects of the fuel shortage in Gaza and run quotes by former president Carter that describe Israeli actions in Gaza as "a crime and a savage act."

Front page reports announce that, "Israel heightens security," ahead of the Passover holiday and will seal its borders with the West Bank from April 17 to April 27. The front page of Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that "Washington is worried about the violence in the Middle East." Related reports in all papers highlight warnings by the Arab League about the consequences of Israel's "ethnic cleansing war" against Palestinians and "hunger policy against Gaza."

The front pages of Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam carry photos of Palestinian President Abbas during a lecture at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations on April 17. Abbas said that, "the

conference planned for Moscow in June must rescue the peace process." The dailies also highlight that Abbas insisted that "Israel is placing obstacles to the peace process." Citing an AFP story, Al-Ayyam reports that Abbas stated that, "We have great hopes that the [Moscow] conference will move the peace process between Palestinians and Israel forward and that it will lay the ground work for an overall peace process in all of the Middle East, including Syria and Lebanon."

All front pages dedicate substantial coverage to "commemorative ceremonies on Prisoners Day" on April 17. Al Quds documents the presidential celebration in Ramallah with a photo of Palestinian Premier Salam Fayyad attending the ceremony. Palestinian President Abbas said in his remarks that, "there can be no peace agreement without freeing all prisoners." Al-Quds reprints the entire transcript of Abbas remarks. The dailies also report on several public protests and gatherings held throughout the West Bank. Other inside pages of the dailies report that, "Palestinian children sent a letter to President Bush and to the world asking them to free their parents from Israeli jails." A photo of an elderly mother weeping and carrying a picture of her jailed son appears on the front page of Al-Ayyam.

The meeting between former President Carter and a Hamas delegation on April 17 in Cairo attracts front page coverage in all dailies. Al-Quds front page reports that Carter met with Egyptian President Mubarak on April 17 and will meet with Syrian President Al-Assad on April 18. While in Syria, Carter will also meet with Hamas official Khalid Mash'al, the paper continues. The front page of Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that, "the White House considers the meeting to be useless." Al-Quds front page also runs a full translation of the Washington Post April 17 op-ed by former Hamas foreign minister al-Zahar.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida front pages a photo of Palestinian children standing with a sign that says, "Don't demolish the kindergarten."

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The protest came as the Israeli high court considers a decision to demolish parts of the Al-Aqaba village near the northern West Bank town of Tubas. The Israeli military has urged that houses and a school be demolished because, "they are located in a military zone".

Citing the wires, the front page of Al-Quds reports on the killing of 65 Iraqis and injuring of 60 others following an explosion in Karkuk on April 17.

BLOCK QUOTES:

11. Independent Al-Quds carries an op-ed by Dr. Naji Sharab, a political science teacher in Gaza, entitled, "What does the world expect from Palestinians? (04/18):"... the Palestinian question is the only one that enjoys the support of international declarations about its rights, including the right to self-determination. Yet, the international community has worked to prevent Palestinians from obtaining their rights. Moreover, the international community has called upon Palestinians to prove that they can practice democracy with a kind of transparency... that can rarely be found even in Western democracies. [Despite this demand] Palestinians were punished for practicing democracy and choosing Hamas, which should be considered an internal matter [not open to foreign intervention]... Democratic regimes, primarily the United States, have not given this show of democracy a chance because it was not to the benefit of Israel. Therefore, a decision was made to derail it, first by the siege [economic blockade], then by [military] power and aggression, and by assassinations and the imprisonment of parliamentary members...[actions] which historically have not happened even in the most dictatorial of countries. This is a real history lesson in how a strong democracy assassinates a weaker one."

12. Independent Al-Ayyam carries an op-ed by regular columnist Muhammad Yaghi, entitled, "Invading Gaza" (04/18)": "... isn't

destroying Hamas really just a call for other more extreme Islamic movements to come in and replace it? Some people think that Israel is indifferent [to such a scenario] or that such a development would serve to better justify Israeli military attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel might not care, if Gaza were not on its border, but [attracting more extremist elements] along the borders of Israel is the last thing that Israel needs. The Israeli military may think that there is no difference between Hamas and more extreme Islamic organizations like Al-Qaeda. But in reality, Hamas has a political leadership that supervises its military structure and controls it. In the case of Al-Qaeda, it is more of a militant group that acts alone, on the basis of continuous warfare... regardless of the costs or methods of fighting. The issue of Gaza rocket attacks has no military solution. It only has a political solution; a comprehensive truce in the West Bank and Gaza, the lifting of the siege and reopening of [Gaza] crossings, especially Rafah, the exchange of prisoners and acceleration of political negotiations to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank."

Walles